

A
SERMON

PREACH'D at the
Archdeacon's Visitation

A T
HITCHIN,
On the 12th of APRIL, 1716.

By WILLIAM LYTON, M. A.
Rector of *Knebworth*, and lately Fellow of
King's College in *Cambridge*.

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SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

HATCRAFT

On the 1st of April 1780

By WILLIAM HATCRAFT, M.A.



Rector of Hatcraff Church, and
Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

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2 COR. VI. I.

We then as Workers together with him, beseech ye also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.



PAUL, in this Epistle to the *Corinthians*, generally urges all his Exhortations, Reproofs, and Admonitions in the Name of the whole Ministry of Christ. And in the Verses foregoing the Text, he acquaints them with the great Authority they were entrusted with, even that of being the *Embassadors of Christ*: Telling them, that they in Christ his stead did beseech

them to reform their Lives, and accept the Reconciliation to which God invited them, upon the Terms offered by him; and that because Christ, *who knew no Sin*, had become a Sacrifice to purge them from their Sins, to the intent that thereby they might be changed from Sin to Righteousness, and be justified of God.

Here therefore, in the Name of the whole Ministry of Christ, he beseeches them, that since now the accepted Time is, and their Sins are once freely forgiven, they would not relapse into their former evil Course of Life, nor frustrate the gracious Mercies of God, in permitting the Gospel to be cast away upon them: By the Word Grace being meant the Gospel, in opposition to the *Mosaical Law*, as *Rom. 6. 14.* where having shewn the Necessity of their living righteously and godlily, he adds this Reason, *For ye are not under the Law, but under Grace.*

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Discourſing on theſe Words, I ſhall

First, Endeavour to ſhew, who are to be termed the Workers together with God.

Secondly, How it is that we of the Holy Miniſtry ought to be Workers together with God.

Thirdly, To exhort and caution our Hearers, that they receive not the Grace of God in vain.

First, Who are to be termed the Workers together with God.

Our Saviour Chriſt having eſtabliſhed his Church on Earth, did not think it enough barely to leave us the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, to which we might have recourſe for the Regulation of our Lives, and the proper Way to lead us to eternal Salvation, though they are the moſt precious Treafure in the whole World; but he likewiſe appointed and eſtabliſhed ſome Sacred Orders

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of Ministers, to be assisting in that momentous Concern, the promoting the Salvation of Souls; to preach and enforce the saving Truths of the Gospel; to convert Sinners unto God, and to gain sincere Believers to Jesus Christ.

In order thereunto, he first appointed the Twelve Apostles, to whom he gave the same Power which he himself had receiv'd from the Father, telling them, *John 20. 21. As my Father sent me, so send I you; i. e.* "A free and full Commission I give unto you, for sending others for the same Purpose that ye your selves were sent; to plant Churches, to confirm such as had been admitted into them by Baptism, and regulate all Matters belonging thereunto, and to Ordain and Constitute Ministers proper for the Service of them": And so for them to constitute others for a continual Supply and Succession; he having promised to be with them *unto the End of the World.* A sufficient Proof, that what the Apostles themselves instituted, was to hold good as long as the Church

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Church of Christ endured ; the Promise not being made to them only, but to their Successors ; not to their immediate Persons alone, but to the Office, which was for ever to be continued.

Next to the Apostles, he constituted the Seventy, *Luke 10. 1.* who were inferior to the Apostles, being Coadjutors to them, attending them in their Travels, as some of them did St. Peter from *Joppa* to *Cæsarea* : Out of which Number likewise St. Matthias was chosen into the Apostleship of *Judas*. These obeyed the Apostles Orders in going to Churches at a great Distance, where-ever they sent them. Among these, some were Evangelists, some Prophets, and some Teachers ; and thus we find different Orders appointed by Christ himself in his Church.

And as the Apostles, representing the Person of Christ after his Ascension, had a full Power over all things belonging to his Church, and were under the immediate Direction of the Holy Ghost, who did

did in an extraordinary manner enlighten and assist them in all things relating to the well ordering of it; so the Officers instituted by them, must of Necessity be agreeable to the Will of God, and that Form of Ministry which we and every Church of Christ are obliged to maintain. So that if Episcopal Jurisdiction, and the different Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, were founded by Christ and the Apostles; then is our Form of Church-Government Regular and of Divine Authority; and we, who are admitted into these Sacred Orders, the true Ministry, and Workers together with God; and consequently all that separate from our Communion, as disapproving such Orders, and setting up a Parity of Ministers in Opposition to them, are guilty of a wicked and groundless Schism. Now that the Apostles, who were themselves Bishops at large of the Christian Church, did, after their Master's Example, institute Bishops, is plain: For St. *James* the Just was conse-

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crated the first Bishop of *Jerusalem* by St. *Peter* and St. *John*, not without the particular Direction of our Saviour, as some think. And when he was martyred under the Reign of *Nero*, *Symeon* the Son of *Cleophas* was appointed to succeed him by the same Apostles: And St. *Peter* the first Bishop of *Rome*, was succeeded by *Linus*. It would be tedious and needless to bring any more Examples of this Nature; but it will plainly appear to those that examine Ecclesiastical History, that the Apostles Power was transmitted to certain Persons, whom they chose for their Successors, and whom they called Bishops. For indeed the Name of Apostles was appropriated to the first Twelve and their Contemporaries, not being continued to others after their Death, through a grand Veneration paid to their Memories. An Order thus establish'd at first by the Authority of Christ, and afterwards by that of the Holy Ghost, leading the Apostles into all Truth, and directing them in all Ecclesiastical

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astical Affairs: An Order, I say, established by this Authority for the Government of Christ's Kingdom upon Earth, can be abrogated by no Power less than that which at first established it. Our Lord saw the great Suitableness, Usefulness, and Necessity of it, for the good Order and Edification of his Church, before he appointed it; and upon a competent Trial and Probation, promised to be present with it to the *End of the World*. He intended a perpetual Continuation thereof, and design'd it as a Provision no less for After-times, than for the Apostolical Age. They therefore who endeavour to abolish this Holy Order, are Enemies to Christ and his Institution, imposing on us, instead thereof, the vain Contrivances and foolish Inventions of Men.

The next Order to Bishops was that of Priests. When the Apostles divided among themselves the different Parts of the World, for the better Propagation of the Gospel, they ordained Elders, *i. e.*

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Presbyters or Priests in every Church, *Acts* 14. 23. assigning to each the Place and Church he should attend upon, and appointing one Chief or Mother-Church, where the Bishop personally resided, to have Rule and Authority over all the rest.

Thus the Spirit of God directs his Charge by St. *John*, in the 2d of the *Revel.* to *Timothy* Bishop of *Ephesus*: So that here Episcopacy is approved of by our Saviour himself, and that not in one of his Apostles, but in *Timothy*, whom St. *Paul* had constituted Angel or Bishop of the Church of *Ephesus*, the Metropolis of the Proconsular *Asia*, in which Circuit the Seven Churches, which are written to in this Chapter, lay: and herein he is commended as a Bishop, for rejecting those that were Impostors.

And when a Dispute arose about Circumcision, St. *Paul* and many of the Elders went to *Jerusalem*, and were assembled before St. *James*, as the Dioce-

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fan of the Place, whose Sentence in the Case was decisive, *Acts* 21. 23.

Titus, who was Ordained Bishop of *Crete* by *St. Paul*, is ordered by him to regulate all Matters belonging to the Church, and to Ordain Priests or Elders; for this Cause, says he, *left I thee in Crete, to Ordain Elders in every City.* *Titus* 1. 5.

And *Timothy* only (without any notice taken of the Consistory of Presbyters being join'd with him) had the Charge given him of *receiv[ing] Accusations against Elders*, and the *laying on of Hands*. And when he is ordered to keep the Commandments without Stain or Corruption (*1 Tim.* 6. 14.) till the Coming of Christ, it must be understood, that he shou'd adhere to the Gospel and Orders of Christ without Mixture of unsound Doctrine; and that this is an Instruction not to him only, but to last even to the End of the World, for all that were to succeed in the Episcopal Function; for he could not live till Christ's Second Coming: So that hereby

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it appears, the Office was to be continued in lawful Successors as long as the World endured.

The next Order that we find in Scripture, is that of the Seven Deacons, *Acts 6.* where they were Ordained by the Apostles, and appointed by them as Overseers of the Distribution of the Charity, which was collected among the Faithful for the Relief of the Poor; of which Number was *St. Stephen* the Protomartyr, and *Philip* that preached the Gospel to the Eunuch of the Queen of *Æthiopia*: Which Order, as it was inferior to that of Priests, makes up the Three distinct Orders retained in our Establish'd Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.

Which Three Orders, as they are warranted by Holy Writ, so do we find them continued in the Primitive Church. *St. Ignatius*, who was a Disciple of *St. John*, and Bishop of *Antioch*, in his Epistles directed to several Churches,
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* distinguishes the Three Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons: And when he was carried from *Antioch* to *Rome* to be martyred, he writ to his Clergy at *Antioch* (if that Epistle be Genuine) || to feed his Flock, till God should shew unto them him that should rule over them after his Death. Thus, as we find the Episcopal Function and Authority over the rest of the Clergy instituted by Christ and the Apostles, and exercised in the Primitive Times; so has there been an uninterrupted Succession continued down to our own Age. And it can no ways be made appear,

* Ὁ ὅστις ἐπισκόπος καὶ πρεσβυτεῖς καὶ διακόνους πρᾶξων π, ἵνα ὁ καθαρός ἐστιν τῇ συνειδήσει. viz. *He that does any thing without the Bishop, and Presbyters, and Deacons, is not pure in his Conscience.* Ignat. Ep. ad Trall. §. 7.

— Μετὰ τῷ ἀξιοπρεπεστάτῳ ἐπισκόπῳ ὑμῶν, καὶ ἀξιοπλοῦς πνευματικῆς σφαίρας τῷ πρεσβυτεῖς ὑμῶν, καὶ ἡμεῖς χρί Θεὸν διακόναν. *Together with your most worthy Bishop, and the well-wrought Spiritual Crown of your Presbytery, and your Deacons, which are according to God.* Ep. ad Magnes. §. 13.

Πάντες τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ ἀκολουθεῖτε, ὡς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τῷ Πατρὶ, καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτεῖω ὡς τοῖς ἀποστόλοις. Τὸς δὲ διακόνους ἐντρέπετε ὡς Θεῷ ἐντολῇ. Ad Smyrn. §. 8.

Ἐπεὶ ἔν ἡμεῖς ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ Δάμα τῷ ἀξιοθέῳ ὑμῶν ἐπισκόπῳ, καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἀξίων Βίαν καὶ Ἀπλωνίῳ, καὶ τῷ σωδὲ με διακόνῳ Σωπῶν. Ad Magnes. §. 2.

|| Ὁι πρεσβύτεροι, ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον, ἕως ἀναδείξῃ ὁ Θεὸς τὸ μέλλοντα ἄρχιν ὑμῶν. Ep. ad Antioch.

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that mere Presbyters had the Power either of Ordination or Confirmation without the Bishop. On the contrary, when mention is made in Scripture of the Administration of either of them, it is said that they were perform'd by the Apostles. Thus Confirmation, by laying on of Hands after Baptism, was perform'd at *Samaria* by St. *Peter* and St. *John*, at *Ephesus* by St. *Paul*. (*Acts* 8. 17. *Acts* 19. 5, 6.) Thus Ecclesiastical Officers were ordained by the same Sacred Order of Men. For Instance: The Deacons were brought before the Apostles, and ordain'd by them, *Acts* 6. 6. We find the Apostles, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, ordaining Presbyters or *Elders* in every Church, *Acts* 14. 23. And that *Timothy* and *Titus* were not consecrated Bishops without the putting on of the Hands of St. *Paul*, and Authority given by him, is plain from 2 *Tim.* 1. 6. and *Tit.* 1. 4, 5. This is the Scripture-Account of the Exercise of these Powers, this the Practice which the Church of God has always

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always observ'd in these Matters, and which our Church uses and retains to this very Day.

And we may observe, that in other Reform'd Churches, where Presbytery has prevail'd, Episcopal Jurisdiction was not rejected thro' any Dislike to that Order or Office; but because the Bishops, in those Places, adhered to the Pope's Authority, and would not admit of the Reformation: So that rather than lie under the Slavery of the *Roman* Yoke, they instituted their Church-Government without the Assistance of that Sacred Order. And when several that had embraced the Reformed Religion fled out of this Kingdom from the Persecution in Queen *Mary's* Time, at their Return they pleaded for, and endeavoured to set up, that Discipline, which they had seen, and fancied, and been habituated to in other Reformed Churches; which gave Rise to the Presbyterian Discipline here, and to our unhappy Divisions in the Church of *England*.

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To apply what has been said on this Head. As none but the Apostles in their Time, and those that were consecrated Bishops by them, had a Power of consecrating their Successors and conferring the Orders of Priests and Deacons; so they that take this high Office and Honour upon themselves, without being duly call'd and ordain'd thereto, usurp a Power which was never granted unto them; *not entring in by the Door of the Sheepfold, but climbing up some other way.* For since Christ delivered his Keys to the Apostles, and the Apostles to their Successors duly appointed, but, for a Reason mentioned before, distinguished by the Title of Bishops; and since mere Presbyters have no Authority granted them, in this Particular, by the Apostles or their Successors, nor Warrant from Scripture for using it; but the Presence of a Bishop, and the Laying on of his Hands, is essentially necessary for the conferring of Holy Orders; let them not presume to take an Honour upon themselves, to which they can bring no sufficient Proof of their

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being called of God: For so doing, they prove themselves, and those they ordain, the Men *that run, tho' God sent them not; and that prophesy, tho' God spake not unto them,* Jer 23. 21. Christ commends his Church, Rev. 2. 2. for not bearing with, but casting out those that were evil, such as maintained manifest Errors and Heresies, who assumed the Apostolical Authority, but upon Examination were so far from being Apostles, that they were found Lyars. Let those then who oppose that Government which Christ and his Apostles have instituted, search the Scriptures, and see how these Practices are authorized from them. From thence it is that they are to look for eternal Life, and they are they which witness against them: They are clear enough to shew whether their Doctrine may, by just Consequence, be gathered from thence or not: They are to be our Rule in all controverted Points; and they that will stop their Ears, and shut their Eyes against the Light thereof, must expect no further Conviction. As well the

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for the avoiding of Schism and Confusion, and for the Preservation of Unity, Peace, and good Order in the Church, as by the Example and Decrees of Christ and his Apostles, was the peculiar Power of Ordaining Ministers committed to Bishops only: And as all Power, in that particular, assumed by others, is unwarrantable and unlawful; so is their Ordination void and null, as being neither agreeable to the Scriptures, nor to the Rules and Practice of the Apostles. But the Ministers of our Establish'd Church are built upon this Foundation of Christ and his Apostles and their Successors, and may therefore justly assert the Truth of their Mission, and lawfully challenge to themselves the Character of the undoubted Ministry of Christ, according to the Holy Scriptures. They hold the Head (Col. 2. 19.) from which the Nourishment of the Grace and Spirit of God is communicated to, and by them. As therefore God works in us by the internal Operations of his Holy Spirit,

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Spirit, convincing our Consciences, enlightening our Minds, kindling in us heavenly Affections, and directing and blessing our Labours; so must we cherish all good Motions of the Holy Spirit, and be Workers together with God, in promoting the great and Glorious Design of the Gospel. Which brings me to the Second Head I was to treat of: *viz.*

Secondly, How it is that we of the Holy Ministry ought to be Workers together with God.

And here I shall insist upon these two Particulars only: We must work together with God,

1st, By Preaching and explaining the Saving Truths of the Gospel, and making free Offers of the Mercies of God

2dly, By boldly rebuking all ungodly Persons, and confuting all Gainfayers and Schismatics.

1. As God has committed to our Trust his most Excellent Gospel; so must we acquit our selves as Faithful Stewards of his Holy Mysteries, urging the Saving Truth

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Truths of the Gospel to our Hearers with the strongest Arguments, setting them in the brightest Light, and representing them in the greatest Beauty and Excellency, worthy to captivate all Hearts unto them, and worthy of the joyful Acceptation of all People. For the Heart of Man is naturally indisposed for the right Perception of Divine Truths, and his Affections are remiss and drowzy in the mighty Concerns of God and his Soul; wherefore we are appointed by God Instructors of his People; for *the Priests Lips should keep Knowledge, and the People must seek the Law at their Mouth: for they are the Messengers of the Lord of Hosts.* Mal. 2. 7.

And as we are to urge the Necessity of Obedience to God's Holy Laws, in order to their future Salvation; so are we to make free Offers of the Mercy and Grace of God to all Faithful Believers; to make free Invitations, in the Name of Christ, to all Sinners to come and partake of the Benefits of his Death
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and Passion ; who will certainly make them good to all true Believers : Wherefore says the Apostle, *We pray ye in Christ his stead, be ye reconciled to God.* It is certain, no Sinner can perish for want of Provision made by God for his Salvation, but by his own Wilfulness and Impenitency. For Sinners do not perish, because God will not be reconciled to them, or because they cannot be saved ; but because they will not take care to reconcile themselves to him, and refuse to comply with the proper Means for Salvation. This is the true State of the Case between God and Sinners : They have to do with a very gracious and forgiving Lord ; but they often receive this Grace of God in vain, and grow old in their Wickedness. These we must intreat to come into a State of Reconciliation with God ; being the Servants whom the King sent to invite Guests to his Feast, and to call upon and press them that are bidden, that they would not neglect nor thrust from themselves the kind Invitation of
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the Lord, giving a full Assurance of a gracious Reception and Entertainment, and letting them know the Danger of rejecting his kind Offers unto them, and incurring his high Displeasure. Let *all* them then, *that labour and are heavy laden, come unto Christ, and he will give them Rest.* These Things are we to publish in the most lively manner, that poor Souls perish not, nor die in their Sins, for want of the Knowledge of the Provision of Grace, which God has made for all such as heartily turn and come to him.

2dly, We must rebuke with all Authority the Ungodly, and confute all Schismaticks and Hereticks; that what we urge may be receiv'd, not as the Words of Men, but as they are in Truth the Words of God; wherefore says our Saviour, *he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* We must not then have such Respect for the Persons of Men, as to suffer them to affront God, and violate his Commands, without giving

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giving them a seasonable Check and Re-
proof: The World is too much inclined
to Wickedness, it needs no Encourage-
ment thereto, and the least Connivance
is generally taken as an Approbation;
and so far as we neglect to stand in the
Gap, and oppose the furious Torrent of
Prophaneness and Immorality, so far shall
we be thought to approve of it, and
swim with the Tide, and be Partakers of
other Men's Sins; an Indifferency or
Compliance in such Cases being of very
dangerous Consequence.

And as on one Side, we are to declare the
great Mercy of God to all Penitents; so on
the other hand, must we take care not to
encourage any groundless Hope of Salva-
tion, having Respect unto the Persons of
Men, and proffering them Pardon and
Forgiveness upon any other Terms, than
what we have very good Warrant from
Scripture for; saying, *Peace, when there is
no Peace: Baalam-like*, stretching our
Commission beyond the Intent and De-
sign of it, widening *that Way* to com-
prehend

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prehend great Crowds of Sinners, which Christ has chalked out narrow for the Upright only to walk in, thereby deceiving Mens Souls, betraying our Trust and the Gospel of Christ.

But more particularly must we withstand, and, as much as in us lies, put to Silence, all those that speak against the true Faith of Christ; and tho' we cannot expect our Endeavours in this Kind should work effectually on all; yet when we, as careful Watchmen, have given warning, and performed our Part, then they that stop their Ears like the deaf Adder, and refuse to obey the Truth, must expect that their Obstinacy, Heresy and Schism will rise up against them at the latter Day: But we shall have delivered our own Souls. Many would not hearken to Christ and his Apostles in their Days, neither will they hearken to his Ministers now; but they that reject them, reject God and his Gracious Ordinance. For as God in the first Times spoke to his People by Angels,
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and under the Law by *Moses* and his Prophets, and under the Dispensation of the Gospel by our Saviour and his Apostles: So does he now speak by us his Ministers; whom if they reject and hearken not to, neither will they be convinced tho' a Messenger be sent unto them from the Dead.

To us therefore it belongs to give Diligence, that we be such Faithful Stewards of the Mysteries of Christ, as to answer the great Design of his having establish'd such a Ministry on Earth; that since he has set us over his Household, we may give them their Spiritual Meat in due Season: Praying that his Holy Word may be so ingrafted in the Hearts of all People, that it may become living Food to their Souls; that they may embrace, and ever hold fast the Hope of everlasting Life, by duly using and improving the Grace of God, and not receiving it in vain. Which is the Third and last Head I am to speak to, *viz.*

Thirdly

Thirdly, To exhort and caution our Hearers, that they *receive not the Grace of God in vain*. I do therefore most earnestly beseech them, in the Name of God, that they would not frustrate, nor make void to themselves so excellent a Revelation; but that they would so hear, as to be Partakers of all the Comforts and Hopes of the Gospel, and have a right in all the Promises thereof. Now People *receive the Grace of God in vain*, and lose the Benefit of the Gospel several ways.

1. There be several in these our Days, which make a Mock and Scoff at Religion, coming to hear the Word of God, not thro' any good Design of improving thereby, or being reconciled to the wholesome Rules of Religion, but having their Ears heavy, and their Eyes shut against the Light of the Gospel, lest they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and be converted. Such were

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the *Athenians* who came out of Curiosity to hear *St. Paul*, but gave themselves up to nothing but to tattle, or to hear some new thing, (*Acts* 17. 21.) reviling him as a Babler, and a Setter forth of new Doctrines, and strange Gods: And several now, feigning themselves Just Men, come to hear, as the *Pharisees* and *Lawyers* did Christ, to take hold of his Words, to entangle him in his Talk, and make him an Offender against the Law: But they who oppose and speak evil of the Truth shall receive their Reward, bringing upon themselves swift Destruction.

2. Others there be which hear the Word, but their Hearts are not duly prepared for the Entertainment of such a Guest, wherefore it takes no Root in their Souls, but is as Seed sown by the High-way, where the Enemy of Souls catcheth it from them, as the Fowls of the Air do the loose and uncovered Corn. Such an one was *Felix* the Governor, who when *St. Paul* talked of Righteousness and Judgment, was conscious
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to himself of his wicked Life, and even trembled thereat; but was not at all changed in the inner Man, nor reformed thereby. And such an one was *Herod*, who often heard *John* the *Baptist* gladly, and reformed many things for his Sake; but imprisoned him for his courageous rebuking of him for taking to himself his Brother *Philip's* Wife; and sacrificed him at last to the Malice of a revengeful Woman.

3. Others there be that receive the Gospel with a willing and chearful Heart, but do not consider the Difficulty of the Work, nor the many Encounters they must meet with in the Warfare of Christ: They look only on the easy and pleasant Part of Religion, not computing what Self-denial, what Strugglings with their head-strong Wills and Appetites, and what Temptations of the World they must engage with; wherefore not being duly prepared and fortified, when Vice presents it self charming and enticing to them, or Religion is brought into Contempt, Disgrace, or Per-

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Persecution ; they are affrighted at the Danger, and turn back from making any farther Progress in their Christian Duty. Such an one was the young Man in the Gospel, who would willingly have been reconciled to the Commandments of Christ ; but they taught him to deny these worldly Pleasures, and to part with his darling Riches here upon Earth for the Kingdom of Christ, which he had too great a Share of, and too fond an Affection for, ever to renounce for any heavenly Treasure ; *for he went away sorrowful, because he had great Possessions.* Thus *Demas*, after he had been a Fellow-Labourer with *St. Paul*, forsook him, and embraced this present World. Thus several, because they cannot reach Heaven without great Self-denial, and Loss of their worldly Goods, lose the Benefit of the Mercy and Grace of God.

4thly and Lastly, Others frustrate themselves the glorious Design of the Gospel, by complying with great Me in unlawful Matters, or a Religion con

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trary to their Conscience. Thus we find the great Cardinal *Woolsey*, when in Disgrace, complaining that he had wholly submitted himself to the Will and Pleasure of his Prince; that he had been always glad to please him, even before God, whom he ought most chiefly, and above all, to have honoured and obeyed; which then he repented of, and declared himself fully persuaded, that had he but served God as diligently as he had served his King, he would not have forsaken him in his Grey Hairs. Thus when *Naaman* was cleansed of his Leprosy, he declares he would not thenceforth offer any Burnt-Offering or Sacrifice to any other God, but the Lord of Hosts; yet prays herein, Lord, be merciful unto thy Servant, *that when my Master goeth into the House of Rimmon to worship there, and leaneth on my Hand, and I bow myself in the House of Rimmon, the Lord be merciful unto thy Servant in this thing.* He here acknowledges, and is willing to serve the true God, but chuses at the same

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same time rather to be an Assistant at the Idolatrous Worship, than forfeit the Favour of his Prince : And many there be who will bow down unto *Baal*, and worship *Rimmon*, rather than sink from their Worldly Grandeur, letting the good Motions of the Holy Spirit and the Grace of God be frustrated and become fruitless.

Having thus pointed out some of the most common ways whereby Men usually frustrate the Grace of God, I beseech you to look upon your selves as in some degree cautioned and warned against them. Be not led into the Error of the Wicked, to join with them in any wanton Scoffing at Religion, nor suffer your Hearts to be barred against receiving the Truth in the Love of it, by any Prejudices or evil Dispositions of your Minds : But root out all such accursed Weeds, that the free Soil may cherish the good Seed ; and count the Cost of your Work before hand, and prepare your Souls for Temptation, that no unexpected Difficulties may affright you, nor the overbearing

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bearing Authority of Great Men, nor any other Temptations and Snares of the World, the Flesh, or the Devil, may sway you to offend against a good Conscience, and receive so much Grace in vain.

For be assured, you will be called to give a most strict Account, how you have used the Graces afforded you; and that there is nothing, the Abuse of which will be so severely punished, as the Abuse of Grace. You know we are accountable for the Improvement of all our Talents, the Strength and Health of our Bodies, the Faculties of our Minds, our Wealth, our Time, our Power, Interest and Authority in the World; how much more shall we be answerable for the due Improvement of God's Grace, which is the most precious and inestimable of all his Gifts? The more Grace we have receiv'd, the greater will be our Condemnation, if we despise or neglect it; which is the Reason why wicked Christians are to expect a more intolerable

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Punishment than *Jews, or Turks, or Infidels.* For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.

Indeed, the Abuse of Grace implies the most horrible Contempt of God's infinite Love and Goodness. It refuses to apply the most Sovereign Remedy, that the Almighty Physician could prescribe for the healing of our Souls. It tramples under Foot the Blood of the Son of God, and grieves and does despite unto the Spirit of Grace. It spurns at the richest and most tender Mercies, and repays the most patient Forbearance and Long-suffering with innumerable base Provocations. Such Persons are deaf to the most moving Calls of God, and refuse his most Gracious Invitations: They reject all his Counsels, and despise all his Reproofs. What can be the Consequence of this, but final Reprobation, and God's withdrawing for ever the Grace they have so unworthily slighted? He will shut the Door of Mercy against them,

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In- is them, and give them up to suffer the just Rewards of their incorrigible Wickedness. This Punishment of Grace abused, the Author of all Grace, the Eternal *Wisdom* of the Father, has denounced in the clearest and strongest Terms, *Prov. 1. 24, &c.* *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hands, and no Man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof: I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh; when your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me--- They shall eat of the Fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own Devices.*

To conclude then; Since it will be impossible for us to escape this Doom, if we neglect so great Salvation, let every one that names the Name of Christ, give the most earnest Heed to the Calls of
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God's Grace, that he may not receive it in vain. Let us so entirely resign ourselves to the Influences of it, so carefully follow all its Motions, that it may be the Guide of our Ways, the Rule of our Lives, and the great Principle of all our Actions. Then shall we have a Right in all the precious Promises of God ; and at our Removal out of this World, enter into the Possession of that Life and Immortality, which is now freely offer'd us by the Glorious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory both now and for ever. Amen.*



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